

Losing a Loved One: Unravelling Conceptual Metaphors in Lyrics about Emotional Separation

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Abstract

This paper examines lyrics in contemporary popular music concerning emotional conflict in relationships, how metaphors and other figurative tropes are used in these songs to create greater meaning, and what they show about human cognition. It discusses conceptual metaphors as described by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Conceptual Metaphors in Everyday Language* (1980) and their unusual complexity in song lyrics. The lyrics examined come from *Little Talks* (2011) by Monsters of Men, *Fourth of July* (2015) by Sufjan Stevens, and *You're Somebody Else* (2017) by Flora Cash. All three songs concern separation from a loved one, by death or by emotional distance. The authors use conceptual metaphors in these songs to transform their negative feelings about these sad events into positive perspectives and describe their experiences of losing their loved ones in order to heal from their death or disappearance. The analysis identifies the conceptual metaphors, their entailments, and underlying cognitive patterns evoked by the lyrics. The results of the examination support Lakoff's theory that conceptual metaphors subconsciously shape the way we think and act and share abstract experiences. It contributes further to conceptual metaphor theory by showing examples of poetically complex metaphors and how people may express difficult emotions through conceptual metaphors in order to cope or heal psychologically.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor, lyrics, psychological healing, loss, cognitive semantics